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Relativity and the Speed of Light

The theory of relativity tells us that time and space are not constant but are variable according to the motion of the observer and the observed. The only constant is the speed of light which remains at 186282.397 miles per second in relation to the observer whether she is standing still, travelling toward it or travelling away from it.

The idea that light represents the sole measure of the manifest universe is, in a sense, fully in accordance with traditional doctrine. Those who have followed the Essentialist essays on the Aristasia site will have noted that the form-bearing light (sometimes symbolised by Dea standing upright on the lotus, or by the central point of the Fora) is a primary representation of Essence.

The quasi-absolute quality of light is, symbolically, perfectly correspondent to metaphysical truth.

What may be an interesting irony here is that we may, in fact, be confronted with yet another example of the visible universe, as seen from our earth, representing the non-visible and Intelligible universe, but not necessarily mundane factuality.

The most obvious traditional example of such representation is the apparent superiority in size and brightness of the sun to all other stars, the centrality of the earth and the hierarchical arrangement of the seven visible planets as representing the seven primary principles of being.

These have long been dismissed as "false perceptions" by Rajasic science, whereas *The Feminine Universe* explains that while they may not be physically correct they correspond naturally and providentially to the real character of the universe.

This may well also be true of the apparently quasi-absolute nature of light. Dr Burckhardt notes in his important essay "Cosmology and Modern Science", to be found in *The Mirror of Intellect*:

Do the experiments which are supposed to prove the constant character of the speed of light really get beyond the

earthly sphere, and do they not imply both space and time as usually imagined by us? ... The astronomer who counts, by referring to the lines of the spectrum, the light-years separating us from the nebula of Andromeda, supposes without more ado that the universe is everywhere 'woven' in the same manner. Now, what would happen if the constant character of the speed of light ever came to be doubted— and there is every likelihood that it will be sooner or later — so that the only fixed pivot of Einstein's theory would fall down? The whole modern conception of the universe would immediately dissolve like a mirage.

Nonetheless, as we have said, the quasi-absolute quality of light as presented to our augmented senses (i.e. to our instruments) from our particular position in space-time does answer to an universal truth, just as the apparent centrality of the earth and the sovereignty of sun and moon, and the arraignment of the planets did.

And this is because symbolism is woven into the very fabric of the perceptible universe, and, for us, into our ordained position therein. The symbolism of the visible cosmos presented to our unaided eyes was no more invented by our foremothers in the Age of Gold than were the stars and planets placed by them in their proper stead. Similarly, the quasi-absolute character of light in an otherwise "relative" universe (recall Plato's teaching on the Intelligible world of immutible perfection versus the sensible world - our physically perceived world - of flux and change; and recall that light is always and everywhere the symbol of transcendent Intelligence), while it may not be physically accurate beyond our own limited viewpoint, certainly symbolises truth, as do all the natural appearances of the world.

The irony here is that while Rajasic (Newtonian) astronomy replaced traditional mythologised astronomy with a "modernist" demythologised astronomy; the theory of relativity, which overturns the apparent logic of the Newtonian world, may well return us to a mythologised, that is to a symbolic, view of the universe, though without in the least understanding what it is doing.

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